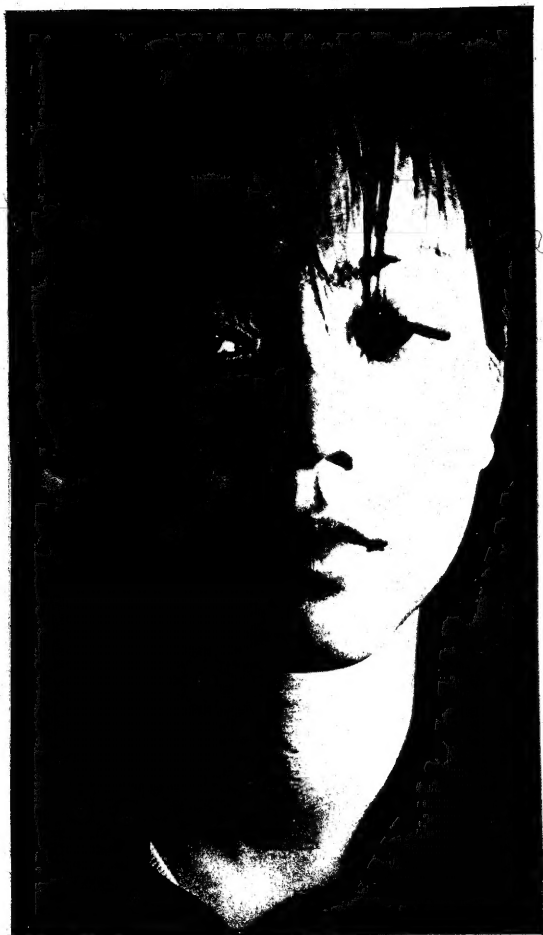


RUBBERNECK

3



stump

peter hammill

the mighty lemon drops

helen chadwick

stan tracey

loose tubes

50p

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COVER STAR
Sui Lok

VOX

AND here we are again! A surprise, maybe, to those of you who'd thought we'd gone the way of most small magazines. . . . As you can see, we've made quite a few adjustments since the last issue. Unfortunately, the price has had to be one of these, but we hope the general improvement in the layout and content will compensate for that.

If this is your first brush with RUBBERNECK, then you maybe surprised to find that we cover a wide range of arts and related areas. This, we hope to achieve in a way that avoids tokenism, and also attempts to break down the conceits and snobberies that surround some artforms. Our taste is catholic - we hope yours is too!

Finally, we are always looking out for new writers, so if you would like to contribute to RUBBERNECK, please contact us first so that we can come to some arrangement.

Chris Blackford

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If you find mistakes in this magazine, please remember that they are there for a purpose. We try to publish something for everyone, and some people are always looking for mistakes.

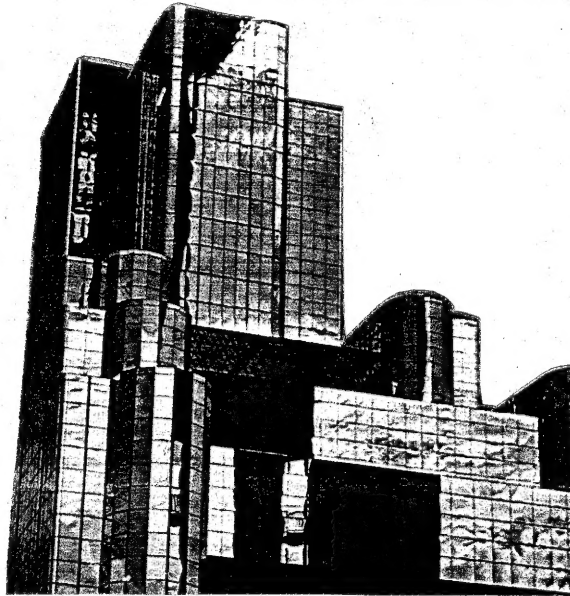
ARCHITECTURE

DRESSED TO KILL

IAN WILLIAMS looks into
the mirror of Birmingham's
hi-tech future, and
discovers that all is not
what it seems ...



The concept of being a major international city has never seemed to attach itself to Birmingham. It's a city derisively dismissed as a vehicular city, whose only justification is its utility as a traffic intersection.



Even its most famous 'cultural' product is called, rather optimistically, Crossroads. Concrete is not the stuff of which dreams are woven; so the city right from the start was never going to capture the wider public imagination in any positive way. Its overall negative connotations are perhaps best illustrated by the one person who seems to have dealt imaginatively with the city: Sir John Hackett, in his book, The Third World War, in which he appears to twin the city with

Dystopia, as this index shows:

Birmingham: chosen as target for Soviet atomic attack, 365; destruction of, 323, 371-90, 395, 413, 418; nuclear warhead detonated above Winson Green Prison, 371-4; heat wave, 373; blast pressures, 373-5; casualties, 374, 377-8; damage at airport, 375; explosion heard in London, 375, 388; fires,

So, in this version the esteem blackout that surrounds the city, becomes a nuclear blackout. Today a different version of 'redeveloping' the city may be emerging: not radioactive, but image-active. Under Olympic pressure the city is being forced to look at itself in an international context, and it is now set on developing an international profile (and it's not the new Beirut). Witness the extraordinary advert placed in a recent Observer colour supplement: "EVEN J.R. WOULD FEEL AT HOME IN BIRMINGHAM". The copy continues: "Today a stranger on the streets of Birmingham might easily imagine himself in the heart of Manhattan, or rubbing shoulders with the oil barons in Dallas. Birmingham today is no stranger to the elegantly soaring pinnacles of business and finance that dominate the skylines of the world's great cities. Edifices in glass and stone that are monuments to the financial acumen of their creators. Reflections of a thriving enterprising city at the heart of a nation ..."

UPDATING.

For a vehicular city the Super Prix road race provided an obvious entry into the world's limelight. Here we see the city moving the image from car manufacture (the past) to motor racing, sponsorship, the T.V. spectacle (a future). As well as demonstrating to the Olympic committee that the city can stage the big T.V. sports event, it showed to a much wider audience certain security possibilities: urban (market) segregation, and the manageability of violence. One was rather surprised to see that a sizeable residential area could be so completely fenced off and T.V. monitored. It was a striking image and a possible formula for zoning some of the city's more inflammable poor districts.

VOYEURS.

Central Birmingham then, is undergoing some dramatic redevelopments; redevelopments that are turning the centre into a kind of film set, fit for advertising, and fit for T.V.. And this is serious redevelopment. To make way for a £121m international convention centre (off Broad Street) they're having to shift the residents of a graveyard, presumably to avoid any Poltergeist type

throwbacks.

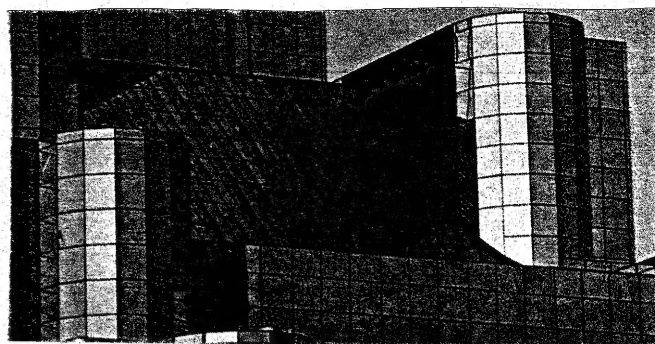
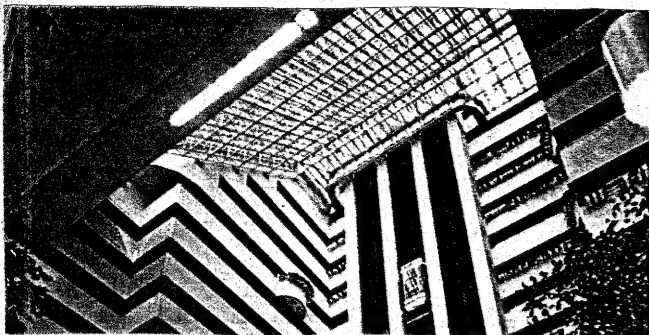
The old 'unsexy' image of grime manufacture is being replaced by the new clean Money, as represented by the fine cut of the new office and hotel space, and the remodelled relit night life. From the outer reality of the inner city street beaches, paved in Triplex sand (courtsey of the Ad shell), it is possible for the excluded to see the new segregated skyline. At night the centre is bathed in NatWest moonlight, and the newly erected glass reflective buildings capture the artificial starlight like an enormous planetarium. In the new planning regime, it seems that if it is tele-genic (fit for some city promo video) then it goes. Mirrored buildings? Sure, very sexy, very Dallas. A new airport terminal? Sure, every major city has to have a 747 parking lot. At street level, new-style wall paper is allowed; gallerias and shops set to feed the Armani kingdom; sexy window displays that make us all voyeurs, and confront us with our ideal partners: the mannequins.

T.V.EYES.

Universities are notorious for their isolationist tendencies, the arms-length attitude towards 'townies'. Yet, Aston university is playing its part in this new visual

enterprise culture. International design consultants have given Aston a new 'corporate image', and have spent nearly £1m on a glass 'sky-lift' for the main entrance hall. The success of the vice chancellor's new corporate university was quickly verified when Central T.V. moved in to film a new series in this 'Hi-tech' lobby and lift system. Plaques went up renaming the university, Hammond Aerospace Industries. Did we see the future of the university flash before our T.V. eyes? Interestingly, it was filmed while the undergraduates were away on vacation. The inevitable conclusion being that the smart university looks better without students.

The lift, which is actually fascinating and alluring, provides a model for the city's redevelopment: the use of Hi-tech architecture as lure, as chic. Its success in this mode may well pose unforeseen problems. For instance, at Aston, it cannot be very long before new security systems are employed to stop the lift filling up with 'corridor people': the new-wave loiterers and shafter turned on by the upward mobility. Students at Aston beware! A student I.D. card may not be sufficient to get you in - get your equity card now!



This lure certainly surrounds the new mirrored buildings that have crystallized in and around the 'financial district'. Behind the public library we have the new Henry Boot constructions, 35,000 sq. feet of mirror office space which links almost indistinguishably to the new Copthorne Hotel.

The most established of these type of buildings reside at Five Ways. Here you have the excellent mirror mirror on the wall Metropolitan House, its neighbour in smokeglass blackout kit, and of course the Horizon building, looking luxurious in its tanned bricks and glass. As this type of Hi-tech building moves into the centre, more and more people will come under its spell. We can only speculate on how much (overseas) capital goes into building them, passes through them. They remain hidden, making an uncertain, but telegenic contribution to the skyline: "the glass skin achieves a peculiar placeless dissociation from the neighbourhood... it is not even an exterior, inasmuch as when you look at the outer walls, you cannot see the building itself, but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it." (F. Jameson)

"DOMESDAY".

You don't have to wear your mirrors on the outside in order to create a cosmopolitan ambience. More down to earth is the creation of an international night life. Here, the mirrors are worn on the inside. There has been in recent years, a considerable cash flow into the 'feel estate' business. As a consequence, a new international style has emerged. Gone (but for how long?) are the old trendy iconoclastic clubs which were about new bands, new music, and gender-bending. We now have the technology of transnational blandness: formula soul/funk for the new lifestyle salariat. Service stations that include Faces and the Pagoda, both examples of retro refits. The self (as in body) conscious club, Liberty's have recently spent £130,000 on a refit, and a new MODEL bar with a laundry list of chic debris that includes, labels, kaleidoscopic drinks, local models (+ photos) and diamond dogs.

The most publicised club is of course, the Dome ("this is the end of the world of second best: Domesday"). To be in the major league you have to be into heavy weight

narcissism, and the Dome certainly is with its 30 tons of mirrors and ... a sophisticated video system with 2 large screens, each 20 ft by 16 ft, and a host of 'state of the art' equipment, including a Sony 3 chip digital camera, one of only six in the country". With this sort of technology it could easily become a club without secrets. You could get the V.J. to track your partner across the laser dimensioned dance floor, and carry out sophisticated body shopping on the club close-circuit. My tip for future club owners is that they should get into military procurement, buy some image intensifiers and then see who you can get into your night sights.

What then, has this new internationalism brought the night pilots? Clubs that have the cosmopolitan consistency of an after hours McDonalds, but deal in a more palatable flesh. This drive has also broken down the traditional boundaries between pubs/clubs/discos. Look at Edwards (the solarium square), the new pubs in the Gas Street basin (where the canal joins the booze as a liquid asset). Clubs and discos are international, pubs are not.

Is it possible then, after years in the wasteland, that

it may be fashionable to live in Birmingham? A place where even J.R. would feel at home? The new developments have brought with them a new 'videospace', but this is essentially exclusive: the clubs through their dress codes and prices; new hotels/offices through employment and credit rating; even the road race, an ideal opportunity for the community spectacle was isolated, encapsulated for the price-fixed gaze of the T.V. eye. All we can do is star on the surveillance screens of the hotel lobbies and shops. The new Birmingham may have to be largely experienced through its advertising.

COMA BABIES.

Do these new buildings really represent, "reflections of a thriving enterprising city at the heart of the nation"? They certainly revitalize the area, adding a glow without increasing the city's electricity bill. The difficulty is in reconciling the exhilaration of these new surfaces with the fact that the city itself has deteriorated. The real city skyline is made up of 360 odd high rise flats in various states of decay. This dazzling new city centre acts as a kind of fantasy playpen, a glossy distraction on the horizon. What happens

if we scratch at these mirrored surfaces; do we see an interior of speculative office space, or an empty hotel room? Has the city turned to manufacturing empty spaces, hidden behind these reflective fenestrations? Has Aston university - about to have itself validated on Central T.V. - actually improved the lot of its students? Are all of these surface changes enough to expand the local economy, to counter the gloomy prognosis the Department of Trade has just produced for this region into the 1990's?

and clubs are full in an impetuous post-recession orgy. The new buildings become trendy wallpaper, and the kids are on a stage. Brought up on T.V. advertising, this is their spiritual home. No innovation, just reproduction. Happiness for the few will be found by drowning in the soft technology of the discos, masturbated by proliferating credit schemes, and driven by Escortphilia. These are Birmingham's very own coma babies.

A GREAT CITY.

So, the city is moving out of concrete into glass,



The planners are building all the right images. They look good, and are eminently transmittable. But the city seems to lack any fundamental innovation. In the war between production and reproduction, the city is pure Xerox: la mode retro. Its role-models are always other cities, other places. But down in the street there will be those, in work, who will be enjoying this unfolding T.V. playpen, as a dream come true. Already, the shops

ironically at a time when concrete mirrors are a very fashionable commodity in New York. But, a cynic might point out that all these latest design manoeuvres are distracting people from the city's real achievements, the ones that place it among the world's great cities: a high crime-rate, high unemployment, bad housing, and pollution. These are the truly fundamental components of the international cityscape. △

INTERVIEW

Helen Chadwick talks to
Chris Blackford

DECAYING MATTERS



WHAT WAS THE INITIAL INSPIRATION, THE STARTING-POINT FOR 'OF MUTABILITY'?

'Of Mutability' came from a poem by Spenser which is part of the Faerie Queen. 'Of Mutability' is a small piece at the end which talks about how human things are subject to change. More to the point, my work

is to do with the burden of physicality and sentience, and how desires and pleasures are very fleeting. How all human experience seems to be very frail, like a bubble. So I wanted a title that wasn't too literal, but if you like, made people conscious of this cycle of changing, nature changing, experience changing.

AND THE PART OF THE EXHIBITION YOU CALL 'CARCASS', THIS IS A METAPHOR FOR HUMAN CHANGE?

Yes, it was meant to be a way of looking at the body; and the column full of compost was a way of thinking about your own body standing there. The fact that it's subject to death and decay.

USING COMPOST AS A MATERIAL FOR A WORK OF ART IS CERTAINLY UNUSUAL. HOW DID THIS COME ABOUT?

Well, I've been using all kinds of living organic matter, both animal and vegetable, in the other part of the exhibition, 'The Pool', where I was photocopying directly from vegetation and animal bodies. Of course, what happens is that one has to work quite rapidly because these things decay. I suppose just through the business of the animals becoming more and more corrupted so I couldn't work with them any more, and the leaf matter shrivelling, I became interested in that passage. I wanted to produce a counterpoint for this delicious world of desire and the senses that was much more specifically to do with how frail things break and decay, and how they become foul. What was surprising when the column was first built and all that material put in it, was how incredibly beautiful it looked.

THIS TENSION WAS CERTAINLY APPARENT WHEN ONE LOOKED AT THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE WORK.

Yes, a kind of paradox really. That which is foul, is really so exquisite.

THIS, OF COURSE, DOESN'T APPLY TO THE OTHER WORK IN THE EXHIBITION, 'THE POOL', WHICH MORE OBVIOUSLY CONVEYS IMAGES OF SENSUALITY AND BEAUTY. HOW HAVE YOU USED THE THEME OF MUTABILITY HERE?

To put it simply, the main part of the work is a blue surface that is supposed to stand as a metaphor for a pool, and resting on it are twelve figures made by using photocopies. Each of those twelve is an exploration for me of some kind of physical

sensation, or some aspect of desire. So I used my body to make them directly; so they're partly autobiographical, but they're also great fictions, and portraits because they actually come from my body. They are also very much a way of picturing something you can't see, because it's to do with an impulse, something internal. The gold spheres on the surface of the pool act as a counterpoint to all the changing, floating, swimming images of myself in all these aspects of desire. I wanted to give the sense of immutability, something never changing, something eternal.

I FOUND YOUR USE OF THE PHOTOCOPYING MACHINE AS A MEANS OF CREATING IMAGES OF PASSION AND DESIRE INTERESTING, INCONGRUOUS EVEN.

Yes, it seemed very incongruous to use Hi-tech equipment to produce a place of desire. But I was interested in sabotaging the conventions of business machinery, computer technology, as a way of producing the irrational, states of feeling, out of it. That seemed to me to be a way of subverting it, and of making it alive, a creative tool. I feel, like a lot of contemporary artists, distrustful of the conceit of the artist's hand. This talented hand, able to tosh off these beautiful creations.

YOUR CURRENT WORK-IN-PROGRESS, WHICH ALSO INVOLVES PHOTOCOPYING, IS BASED ON AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PAINTING IN THE BIRMINGHAM ART GALLERY, 'ALLEGORY OF MISRULE' BY JOHANN PLATZER. I READ THAT YOU INTEND TO SHOW THE CENTRAL FEMALE FIGURE TRANSCENDING THE CONDITIONS OF MALE DOMINANCE AND OPPRESSION. WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT AS A FEMINIST WORK?

Feminism is to do with politics, problems of power and relationships. In 'Of Mutability' I was concerned with issues of desire. In this image I am concerned with a more exterior, objective sphere. I think of this work as being cautionary. In the same way that the original allegory is about misrule, I wish to make an allegory for misrule. I feel it is very much a feminist issue because of the work that a lot of women are doing now. I think very much of the

women at Greenham. I would like to show this central figure, this woman, as struggling with the burden and oppressive knowledge of the inevitable consequences of this society. So the figure is both a self-portrait in one sense, because it's a way of me coming to terms with my fears for the future; but at the same time, she stands in that position of conscience that many many women in our society stand.

I identify society as being male. I identify the fears, the destruction as being male caused. But I don't want the work to be seen as a propagandist message, there are placards that can do that job. Although the issue is an external one, a public and collective one, I would hope that it would work on the individual in a private and intimate way. That it would, if you like, prick their conscience. △

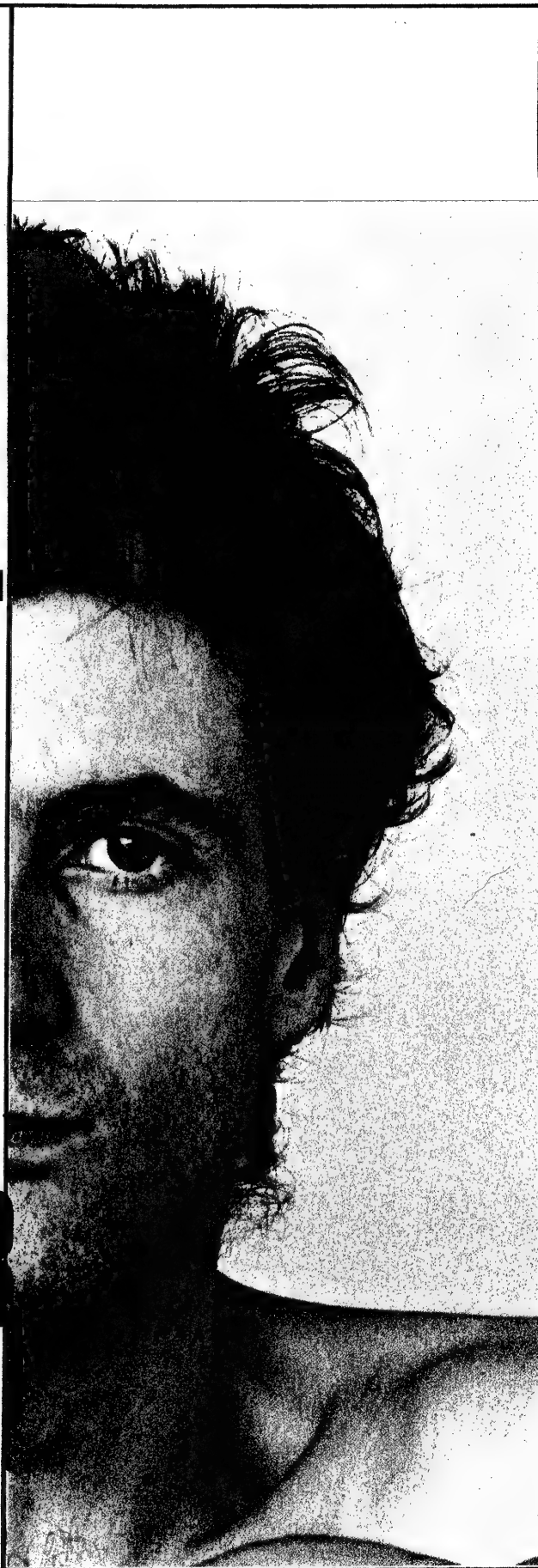
(Helen Chadwick's 'Of Mutability' is currently on a nationwide tour. Arrangements to tour Germany in 1987 have now been confirmed.)



INTERVIEW

**PETER
HAMMILL
ONE MAN
& HIS
VAN DER
GRAAF
GENERATOR**

Text:
Chris Blackford



Ironically, Peter Hammill and Van der Graaf Generator (VdGG) enjoyed a modest degree of fame at a time which is remembered less for its music than for penny-collar shirts, rainbow tank tops, flared trousers and of course, platform shoes. In fact, the latter provide a reasonable enough metaphor for what many of the then "progressive groups" seemed out to achieve. Whilst the pop end of the market sprinkled itself with glitter, the 'serious' bands of the early to mid-seventies embraced the new technology from platforms decked with mini-moogs, mellotrons, and Rickenbacker twin-neck basses, reaching uncomfortably for the emotional heights attained by the nineteenth century Romantic composers. Technical proficiency was at a premium: the advent of the "keyboard wizard", the heyday of the "guitar hero". Those who'd read a classic or two in their youth, re-read it, and thus was born the "concept album". And if you hadn't read any, you could always borrow a few names from Tolkien, invent your own fantastical world, and pay Roger Dean to illustrate your latest gatefold sleeve. Very simple, really - and very lucrative.

Interestingly, VdGG seems to have avoided the merciless flak hurled at most other bands of this period. I put this point to Peter Hammill himself.

"It's my belief that VdGG didn't really fit into the general order of things, particularly because of our different attitude to playing and music, as ends in themselves. There was always something unpredictable, yet 'philosophically' consistent about the band, when more and more of those around us were heading for meaningless virtuosity, lowest common denominator standardisation, and stadium 'normality'."

Philosophical, Hammill's work certainly is, both with VdGG and as a solo artist. Personal identity, the unconscious mind, free-will and determinism are amongst his favourite concerns. Time and again he drops the central isolated 'I' of his songs into the maelstrom of philosophical debate, giving it a voice that whimpers and soothes, rages and curses with the scale and conviction of a Shakespearean tragic hero. Sadly, although it is one of the most expressive voices in rock music it has reached only a relatively small audience.

Despite the lack of widespread acclaim, his commitment has never wavered. Even when punk blew a hole in the side of the music scene, and the established order ran for cover, or otherwise cobbled together unlikely "supergroups", he continued to produce, with admirable singlemindedness, the sort of music he wanted to produce, with few concessions to his

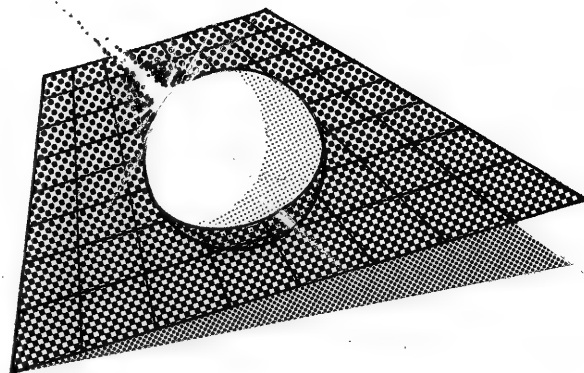
audience. But surely the Big shake-up caused him at least a little anxiety?

"No more than usual! Actually I thought it was about time. But punk didn't change my attitude to song-writing. I wrote my 17,18,19 year old songs at that age, and didn't intend to emulate them. In fact, I hoped that it would all lead to a greater diversity of musics. Sadly, we all now know events proved almost completely contrary to such a vision."

Punk may not have been the reason for the change in musical style on The Future Now (1978) and pH7 (1979), but an increased use of electronics was evident. The lyrics also broadened in scope to cover areas of social and political importance like, apartheid, chemical warfare, and the conflict between science and religion.

"Electronics had always been an element of VdGG work as well as my solo work," he explains, "but usually in the background. On The Future Now it simply went foreground. With regard to the lyrics, I felt that the climate of the song, and pop music, could stand for non-dogmatic songs such as these. Also, I felt it within my technical songwriting abilities to write them."

But these days we don't seem to get much of an opportunity to see Mr. Hammill performing his work in that inimitably explosive manner. Is



touring no longer important to him?

"Far from it," he assures me. "I tour a fair deal, given my venerable age and condition, but world-wide. I would like to play outside London, however, the equation really demands a bit more on the time/money/promotion front. Nevertheless, live playing is still highly important to me."

While we await news of his next tour plans we can at least content ourselves with this year's album, Skin, which for anyone unfamiliar with his past work, is as good an introduction as any. And current projects?

"Well, I've been writing an opera, with Chris Judge Smith as librettist, for some fifteen to sixteen years and it's now at a peak stage of final writing being completed, prior to casting, recording etc. Since it's such a long-term project now approaching completion, I'd rather not talk any more about it until it's finally realised!"

Perhaps he wouldn't mind shedding a little light on a rather embarrassing subject: commercialism. Has he ever been tempted, in a moment of extreme vulnerability maybe, to have a go at something just a little bit more commercial: a three-minute pop single, perhaps?

"Do wha'?"

FILMS

Heaven Hell

STATIC (15)

Director: Mark Romanek

U.S.A. 1985

MONA LISA (18)

Director: Neil Jordan

G.B. 1986

After the death of his parents, Ernie Blick (Keith Gordon, who co-wrote the screenplay with Romanek) begins work on a machine which he believes will relay pictures from heaven. He invites a small group of friends and relations to view the finished machine and, perhaps not surprisingly regales them with a screen full of interference - the static of the title.

Somewhat miffed that no-one else can see what he can, Blick attempts to gain a wider audience for his machine. He hijacks a bus load of credulous pensioners with the demand that he appear on prime-time television. Unfortunately, for Blick, the pensioners, the T.V. crew, and perhaps the entire population, this act of benign

terrorism ends in tragedy.

The narrative takes place against a stunningly effective backdrop: a perpetually empty diner, the harsh desert light picking out a yellow car moving along the deserted highway, a conversation held in the shadow of a vast power station. All of these images create a sense of both space and isolation, which echoes the isolation and loneliness of the personalities who are drawn to Blick and his machine. There is the musician fleeing success and acclaim; the lover working long hours in the empty diner; and Blick's cousin, preaching sidewalk evangelism and living out post-Vietnam survivalist fantasies.

Where Static seems to suffer, is in a surprising lack of character development which on initial viewing left me feeling unsatisfied. After a time, however, this film has a tendency to disturb the more one recalls it. It's as if the strength of the visual presentation is the only way

to even begin to portray the characters. And, in a similar way, their separate interests in the grotesque machine, is the only way in which they seem worthwhile.

If Static is a film where depth of characterization

is made redundant by powerful visual images, the opposite is to some extent the case in Neil Jordan's Mona Lisa, where character development forms very much the centrepiece to the film. George (Bob Hoskins) is released after seven years in prison, and becomes employed as a minder for a prostitute, Simone, working the "high-class" end of the vice market.

As he falls in love with Simone, George struggles, in vain, to reconcile the basic purity of his feelings for her, with the degradation and exploitation upon which they both exist.

When Simone is not "in business" they drive through the red light areas around Kings Cross station looking

for a prostitute from her "down market" days. Unfortunately, the portrayal of prostitution in these scenes borders on pastiche, rather than becoming the surreal distillation of a grubby and unpleasant trade that Jordan was doubtless attempting to depict.

The major strength of the film, which lifts it above the confines of rather a basic plot, is the central performance from Hoskins. As his character falls more and more in love with Simone, he descends further into a world of child prostitution and hard drugs in search of her lost friend. Hoskins makes the confusion and anger in George palpable as the petty criminal reaches his limit and will no longer collude with what he sees.

Mona Lisa does not flinch from using strong visual images, though throughout the film our interest and concern is for the characters of George and Simone whose vitality is ensured by exceptional performances from Hoskins and Cathy Tyson. △

Chas Mason

SID AND NANCY. (18)
Director: Alex Cox
G.B. 1986

With bass guitar and one screaming peroxide girlfriend, Vicious applies prole soccer-



thug mentality to British music scene. "Sex is ugly and boring," Rotten sneers. He sits and waits, while first they screw, then screw up their lives. "Sid is the band," McLaren decides. He

has an eye for a golden shower, knows a prize asshole when he sees one. Director, Alex Cox reshuffles the Pistols' pack until he comes up trumps. It's an old trick, but it might just work. We'll call it a love story - a new story! Don't pull my plonker, Alex.

Have piles of money will travel, to New York. Sid (Gary Oldman) and Nancy (Chloe Webb) go where every other rock star's been. They leave two empty suitcases marked "BRAINS" back in Blighty. Once wed, they celebrate by declaring their bodies narcotic test sites. Squalor upon squalor, with glimpses of smackhead love barely aware of itself. Cox

gives us the unglamorous fly-on-the-shit-on-the-wall view of their hand to hypodermic syringe existence, crumbling inexorably to Nancy's manslaughter and Sid's overdose.

Nihilism is too fine a word for it. File under 'Perverse Nostalgia' alongside the other overplayed and corrupted legends like, Monroe and Elvis. Yes, it's amazing how quickly legends are produced these days, and amazingly sad how something as fresh and invigorating as the Sex Pistols once was, has so quickly become very ugly and very boring too. △

Andy Breton

INTERVIEW

STAN TRACEY

STAN TRACEY is certainly in the forefront of British composers and pianists. He has now been officially recognized in artistic circles by the awarding of an O.B.E. in the Queen's Birth-

day Honours List. It is surprising that it has taken so long for the British musical and artistic establishment to recognize the gifts this extraordinary man has given to British jazz. For those of us who have watched him on many occasions, we never cease to be amazed by his dedication to British jazz and his own particular niche within it.

His preparation is meticulous and moderately eccentric. Quite often he will

The story so far - part 1

Steve Grove-Humphries
Philip Hanson

approach a room, circle around it and almost try to work out the subtle variances of tone and ambience. Several cups of tea sustain him with endless cigarettes burning in ashtrays as he tests out



the all important piano. I have seen him play concert grands and upright pianos of no distinction and less tone with equal concentration. He is a professional in many ways. It is a

singular honour for him to have been chosen, but one can only wonder that whilst in the classical world knighthoods are bestowed with great readiness, will we all live one day to be able to announce on stage Sir Stan Tracey ... O.B.E.

FROM ENSA TO THE WEST END

Stan Tracey began his musical career playing what may seem an unlikely instrument: "I don't know why I chose the accordion really, I think I did on its glitter and gloss. They were always studded with shiny stones, and always very glossy instruments. There was a music shop just round the corner at the top of my road and it was the only instrument shop I'd ever seen at that age, and it just happened to be full of accordians and violins. The violin I didn't fancy, so I plumped for the accordion. I'd be about 11-12, something like that."

Did his family encourage him to play?

"My mother did, my father didn't. He didn't like music

of any kind. Well, he liked Ragtime Cowboy Joe, but that was the only tune I found out that he really liked."

There was no radio in the household when Stan was a child, but the people downstairs had one, and Stan first heard something approaching jazz on the neighbours radio.

"Bands like Harry Roy, Oscar Rabin, other bands which I can't remember. But they played jazzy things occasionally. I suppose the first jazz I ever heard was in those early films - things like 'Stormy Weather', 'Cabin in the Sky'. Then there was a film called Reveille With Beverly which had various bands in including Ellington. When I joined ENSA, the guys in the band I was playing with had a load of 78s they used to travel around with. That's when I first started hearing people like, Basie, Teddy Wilson and various boogie woogie players at the time. Then from that time on I started listening to jazz seriously."

That was in 1944, when Stan was 16. He worked with the ENSA (forces' entertainment) band for about two years. "It was a gipsy accordion band. The line-up was four accordians, piano, bass, drums and the leader played accordion, trumpet, baritone. It was a sad-arse band."

In the late 40s Stan worked with Roy Fox, Malcolm Mitchell and other less distinguished, dance bands. Was this a good apprenticeship?

"I really can't say. I figured that if I was to get anything out of it I should play it to the best of my ability. I never had to play from music, so I had freedom to play chords and lines of my own choosing. So that's what I did. But I tried to make it as musically interesting for myself as I could and that was beneficial, having to play tunes in different keys was good for the ear. You'd go to a gig and maybe you're used to playing a tune G and somebody calls it E flat, and you rely on your ear to know where you're going. It was another way too of learning all the standards because standards were played a lot in those early bands. So I guess it did me good, yes."

How did Stan first make his way into the jazz scene?

"The first musicians I met were at the Paramount - a Mecca dancehall in Tottenham Court Road, where I was playing accordion with a trio called the Melfi Trio. The bass player would play one and three on the bass, and two and four on the high hat. He used to just stand there doing this with the high hat. The audience there was ent-

irely black, so things could be slanted towards jazz. Then they started a jazz night and that's when I first met people like, Ronnie, Harry Klein, and Leon Roy. Monday would be jazz night and they would have one or two guests, and that's where I met Laurie Morgan. He suggested that I jacked in the Paramount to come and play piano for his group."

P A S S I N G T H E H A T

What sort of working life did a dancehall musician have at West End dancehalls like the Paramount in the late 40s?

"It was about £18 a week, something like that. I played all day. I think the first session started at three o'clock and went on until about six. Have a break and start again, about half past seven till midnight. And one day off a week. Actually I've got all my work diaries since I started - and the other day I found that for years I was working nearly every night. All sorts of places. There was a period when I was working the pubs. This would be between the age of say 23-4 to age 26. I used to work with a trio comprising accordian, bass and guitar, and we loosely based it on the Joe Mooney quartet. The guy on guitar,

a guy called Tommy Middleton really taught me a lot about harmony. He was a very good musician, and I learnt a lot from him, but Tommy was into booze. Not having anywhere to sleep, and only eating fish and chips, he eventually died. So I did those sort of gigs, you know, take it in turns to round the customers afterwards holding up the hat.

"I remember once we did this pub in Camden Town. I was living in Tooting at the time, and Camden from Tooting is about 15 miles, and we got paid 6s 8d each after taking the hat round. Totally mad. Pay the bus fare. Just!"

Musicians' Union scales didn't apply then?

"Well, in the same way as they don't apply now. There was another gig. It was with a guy called Reggy Goff - a paralysed clarinet player who also sang - well he mainly sang, and he had a Vaughan Monroe-type voice. Monroe had a hit at the time called 'Racing with the Moon' and Reggy with his lookalike voice jumped on the bandwagon. We used to play American camps all the time because he got into that scene, and I used to play accordian with him.

"We used to go from London to Warrington (this is pre-motorways), do the gig, wait for him to have an enormous

meal afterwards, 'cos we couldn't afford to, then drive all the way back to London. Then he'd drop me in the centre of town, and I would walk home to the suburbs with the accordian and £3.10s in my pocket for a job well done. I hated that."

The first all-out jazz group which Stan worked was led by Laurie Morgan, and was formed about 1950.

"It was a group called Laurie Morgan's Elevated Music, which I think is a lovely title."

How long did the group last?

"I can't say with any sort of certainty, but it felt like about a year. We had a very good situation. He found a sponsor who hired a room (or bought it) which was ours to rehearse in at any time of the night or day. It was in a basement so we had no noise problem, and he bought band uniforms. I'm afraid nothing came of the group.

"The line-up consisted of me and Laurie, and a guy named Chico, on bongos. A guy called Wizard Simmons on trumpet, Lenny Harrison on bass, and Len Conway on tenor."

Laurie Morgan also collaborated with Stan in jazz and poetry sessions in the 1960s. In 1950, as Stan recalls it, he was already a highly reg-

arded drummer - part of the 'be-bop clique' and the Club Eleven scene. Stan remembers there being more jazz in London's West End in the early 50s than now.

"There was the Flamingo, which used to run an evening session and a late session that ended around four or five. There was a place called the Mapleton, another one called the Felado Club, the Cafe Anglais, and Club Eleven of course. There was a different feeling abroad at the time about music - you know, the people who listened to it and the people who played it. There was an excitement which isn't here now."

But wasn't there also a feeling of being a distant outpost of American music, and that the States was where the music was really developing?

"No, I didn't become aware of that feeling until much later. We were all too involved with the music - to really think about that aspect. I didn't really become aware of that, or rather, it didn't become a pimple until I started working at Ronnie's."

In the early 1950s Musicians' Union restrictions kept American jazzmen out of the U.K.. The main way in which British modern jazz musicians got to hear their



American colleagues was by working in the bands on the transatlantic liners, and getting around as much as possible during the stop-over in New York. In 1953 Stan did the pilgrimage on the Queen Mary: £11 a week, a merchant seaman's card and two and a half days in New York.

TOO MARVELLOUS

"I played there once - in a place called the Paradise Club up in Harlem, with a drummer called Leon Roy, and a bass player called Stan Wasser. We'd been to see Ellington at the Apollo Theatre, and decided when we came out, that we would take this club by storm and have a blow. We did, and I think we got away with it just out of sheer cheek. All the people were black. There weren't too many white people in Harlem even then. And I remember the tune we played: it was 'Too Marvellous for Words'. We were the only three people in the room who thought we were.

"In those days I was listening to all the Parker stuff and the Gillespie-Parker collaborations, Gillespie big band ... That's when the Dial label was becoming available. Things like, 'Thermodynamics' I remember, was one of the titles.

"Pianists? Well, I heard

Bud Powell first, and I was more influenced by his harmonic approach than anything else. Then I heard Monk, and Monk was saying more to me than Powell. So I sort of drifted Monkwards. Monk and Ellington were the two piano players who really zapped me. Actually, I didn't really hear Ellington. I mean, until I was in my late twenties. I'd listened to him in my early twenties and it didn't say anything to me. Then, later on I suddenly heard him and I've been listening avidly ever since."

Did Stan have definite ambitions to keep him going through all the dance band gigs?

"Well, I was aware that this wasn't what I wanted to do, and although I knew where I wanted to go, I never felt frustrated and eaten up with the need to do it. I guess I've always been the same. I sort of only deal with the now, the moment. With just a tinge of optimism for the future. Not too much. That way I avoid

a lot of frustration, because like so many guys I know, or knew were really screwed up over what they wanted to do and what they were having to do. I think my philosophy at that time was to quietly beaver away at whatever came along with a view eventually to do something in jazz. I

mean I never knew what the hell I wanted to do - I knew I just wanted to be in jazz. I didn't say: I want to be an arranger/composer or whatever, or this or that. I really didn't mind." △

(more Stan Tracey in the next issue of RUBBERNECK)

REVIEWS

ROCK & JAZZ

EAR WAX

ANDY BRETON rounds-up ten of the more stimulating of this year's releases from the worlds of rock and jazz, and a few that don't fit in either.

DAGMAR KRAUSE - Supply & Demand (Hannibal) Dagmar casts that beautiful and chilling voice across a collection of Kurt Weill songs, with lyrics by Brecht and Eisler. NICK CAVE - Kicking Against The Pricks (Mute) Mr. Gloom's choice of twelve covers. Ranging from the Velvets to Country & Western songs.

DAVID THOMAS - Monster Walks The Winter Lake (Rough Trade) The title says it all. Marvellously eccentric. THAT PETROL EMOTION - Manic Pop Thrill (Demon) Fast and furious, but under control. A breathtaking debut! ORNETTE COLEMAN/PAT METHENY - Song X (Geffen) Masterful Coleman with versatile support from Metheny. Vital! THE FALL - Bend Sinister (Beggars Banquet) Always idiosyncratic, always improving. I'll let M.E.S. say the rest. STEPHAN MICUS - Ocean (E.C.M.) No da-

bbler in world musics. Listen and be converted. PETER HAMMILL - Skin (Foundry) Still hasn't discovered the meaning of Life; but, if you haven't already, it's time you discovered him. JAMES - Stutter (W. E.A.) No impediment here. A fine debut. Always thoughtful, never predictable. And finally, KEITH TIPPETT SEPTET - A Loose Kite... (Ogun) Some of the best British modern/free players. Among them Tony 'Bartons Arms' Levin with the sticks. △

my noticeboard. But I'm afraid there wasn't enough to compensate for Picasso's obsession with genitals which we are supposed to view and admire "because it's Picasso". His women are objects, they have no soul, no life of their own.

I suspect that Picasso was commissioned by post card manufacturers to execute a series of pictures to be sold at 30p a throw. Many of the sketches are conveniently postcard size, just perfect for pushing up profits. Incidentally, the exhibition is sponsored by the American Express Company. Exploitation all round? Certainly sir!

Watch out for the next major exhibition of a major male artist in the only city in Britain. Rodin is on his way! Great artist, or just another dirty old pervert? ▽

ART

THE PROFIT PICASSO

by Viv Styles

Je suis le cahier

THE SKETCHBOOKS OF PICASSO

London Royal Academy

By the time you get to read this you will have missed the exhibition of Picasso's sketchbooks at the Royal Academy. Did I hear you say "So what?" If so, I'd have to agree with you. What in fact did you miss? Subdued lighting (maximum light levels permitted for works on paper), hushed voices

(designed to add to the church-like atmosphere) and the white middle-class shuffling round in an orderly queue, trying to catch a glimpse of the development of Picasso's technique (most learned more about his sexual technique).

Pretentious art historians made inane comments about fine draughtsmanship: pencil as a medium and brevity of statement. More honest comments came from a group of art students: "They're all the same". . . "Have we got to stop here for an hour?" . . . "Sexist". . . "He was just a dirty old perv" and from one little old lady "It's beautiful" as she gazed at an admittedly very fine sketch of mother and child.

There were about six items I wouldn't mind pinning to

BOOKS

by Viv Styles

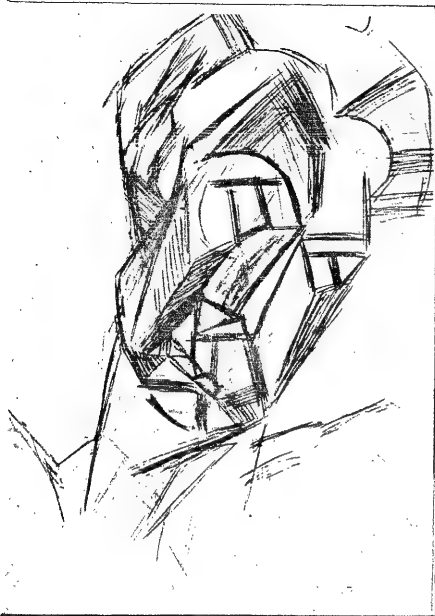
Zora Neale Hurston

THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD

Virago Modern Classics 1986

Not a new book, this. First published in 1937, it tells how Janie, living in the black South, is forced into a loveless marriage by her well-meaning grandmother, but who eventually finds a rel-

PICASSO *Head*,
1909 (63.5 x 47 cm)
Paris, private
collection



ationship where she is allowed and encouraged to discover herself. A familiar theme, perhaps, but beautifully crafted and constructed. Written in the form of 'flash-back' (Janie tells her story to a friend) the words flow from one page to the next. Details are described in glorious technicolour, characters are larger than life but totally believable and immensely enjoyable.

Hurston was a superb story-teller. She spent four years researching black folklore in the South, and published several novels and collections of tales and songs. Her stance on segregation in the 50s (she supported it) meant that she fell out of favour and died in obscure poverty. I have to say that it is a mistake to try and read her

autobiography, Dust Tracks On The Road. Apart from a few pleasant chapters at the beginning, it is mostly self-righteous and arrogant trash. It is hard to believe that these two books were written by the same woman.

Alice Walker explains the contradictions in her two essays on Hurston, and says of Their Eyes...: "There is no book more important to me than this one." Ultimately the book is so superb that it is possible to forgive Hurston anything, and thanks to Alice Walker, she is getting the recognition and publishing she deserves.

Mary Wings

SHE CAME TOO LATE

Women's Press 1986

Fast action. Short sentences. Drugs, sex, and violence. All add up to an entertaining read. Emma Victor, an immensely likeable lesbian with a dry sense of humour, sleuths her way through the book in search of love and a quiet

life. After finding the woman she has arranged to meet, dead, in an alleyway, she gets burgled, slugged, and drugged in her pursuit of truth and justice.

She disguises herself as a woman in order to infiltrate a classy party: "I felt sorry I had worn stiletto heels as I sank into the marshy lawn. The panty hose were beginning to sag and the crotch felt like it was around my knees." Although a reluctant hero (yes, she is a hero) Emma always has an answer, and predictably gets the girl.

Don't think too much about sexual politics if you read this - a woman writing in the Chandler tradition, about a predatory hero, albeit female??? Even so, it's a good read. Mary Wings joins the ranks of Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh and P.D. James - now why is she getting so much hype? She is certainly no worse than they are, and definitely a damn sight funnier.



A Women's Bookshop for Birmingham

Interview and photo:
Chris Blackford

It may surprise you to learn that one of the principal areas of growth in British publishing over the last ten years has been in women's literature. Virago and the Women's Press, to name but a couple, have now established themselves as major publishing companies, dealing exclusively in a wide range of women's literature, both fiction and non-fiction. The move to set up women's bookshops, however, has not been as rapid. London has three women's bookshops: Virago, at Covent Garden, Silver Moon along the Charing Cross Road, and Sister Write, the oldest, at ten years of age, in Islington. Sad to say that the provinces are yet to follow suit. However, plans are afoot to change all that, and it may not be too long before Birmingham can boast its own women's bookshop.



Kathryn Perry, Heather Rutledge and Carolyn Hay, collectively known as the Women's Bookshop and Cafe Co-operative, have been meeting for two years with this intention in mind.

Kathryn Perry explains the initial impulse. "We were responding to the general lack of radical bookshops in Birmingham. Hudsons stocks a women's section which is quite good as far as it goes, but it's fairly mainstream women's publishing. We want to stock a much wider range of women's literature, including imports."

The co-operative also has a clear idea about the type of image they want for their bookshop and cafe.

"The whole idea of setting up a bookshop," says Heather Rutledge, "raised a number of issues for us. The accessibility of books; who goes into radical bookshops; the assumptions made about who reads, and who writes books. We want to break down some of these assumptions, and make writing available to a lot more women. We would like to stock writing by working-class women, black women

writers, and lesbian writers. The sorts of people who are currently made to feel invisible.

"Unfortunately, a lot of people think of radical bookshops as being dingy and

dusty. Our aim is to have a nicely decorated place where people will feel comfortable to come and sit, and have nice food and drink at reasonable prices."

The co-operative has spent much time and energy constructing a business plan and carrying out market research. They are in no doubt that there is "a massive demand" for their venture. However, in their search for suitable premises they have come up against considerable problems. Carolyn Hay explains:

"We have been looking in the centre of town exclusively, but the price of property is massive. Our potential funders are impressed by the business plan, but obviously we don't get any firm guarantee of funding until we have a particular site in mind. We've had quite an enthusiastic response from the West Midlands Enterprise Board, and a more guarded

display of enthusiasm from the Industrial Common Ownership Fund, who have basically said they will fund us if we can find a premises in a good enough place to encourage business."

This, then, is the position as it stands. Recently, the co-operative has been looking at premises outside the centre, in particular, Moseley. Though this, as they freely admit, somewhat compromises their original intention of trying to reach as wide a range of customers as possible. There is more than a hint of frustration, and possibly, desperation, in the tone of their conversation when they say they are now having to look at premises with insufficient space to accommodate a cafe, another of their original intentions. Despite the present obstacles, they are possessed by a strong desire for success - one sincerely hopes that this will not be long in coming. △

(The Women's Bookshop and Cafe Co-operative also run a mobile bookstall, available for bookings. Enquiries to: W.B.C.C.
c/o 119 ANDERTON PARK ROAD,
MOSELEY,
BIRMINGHAM.
Tel: 021 449 7729
021 449 2023)

FOLKLORE

IAN BARRETT takes the forefinger out of his ear and rouns up some of the best folk releases of 1986

MOST non- 'folkies' have a very stereotypical view of what folk music is like and how varied it can be. The general view is often that it is produced by groups wearing arrun sweaters, most of whom will have beards, and stick their fingers in their ears when singing. This view is supported by reference to groups such as the Spinners and the Dubliners. Recently, it has been modified by rock fans coming into contact with the Pogues and The Men They Couldn't Hang, who provide another image, this time of drunken anarchic youth. However, anyone looking through this year's folk releases, will soon see that both of these images far from present the whole picture.

Four of my chosen albums are by Scottish artists, which indicates the very healthy state of music in that country at present. The Battlefield Band's, On The Rise, boldly contains the

legend: "Scotland like you've never heard it before". Probably true, but it could also apply to the Easy Club's album, Chance Or Design.

These two albums represent different and innovative ways of playing traditionally based folk music. The first contains some hard driving dance tunes using highland pipes, backed up by fiddles, guitars, keyboards, and a drum machine. The unusual rhythms help to spruce up the normal jigs and reels, giving the Battlefield band a unique sound.

The Easy Club's second album is a compelling mixture of traditional folk and swing. Any comparisons with Moving Hearts, the Irish folk-jazz-rock band are made redundant because of the Easy Club's total reliance on acoustic instruments. Jim Sutherland's bodhran playing is enough to make any kit drummer hang up his sticks: it's amazing what two hands, one drum, and one beater can

do! Listen especially for the traditional, 'Black is the Colour', and two fine songs by Rod Patterson, 'This For That' and 'Chance or Design'.

The other two albums from Scotland are by the same artist, Dick Gaughan. Not so long ago, Dick had a serious throat illness which threatened to end his singing

career. Thankfully, he recovered, and last year made an emotional return to live work in Edinburgh, thus recording the appropriately titled album, Live In Edinburgh. It contains his more recent material, and displays a move from the traditional to the contemporary folk song. True And Bold, Gaughan's studio album, is a collection of Scottish mining songs, including Gaughan's own 'Ballad of '84'. The album serves as a tribute to the mining communities and their fight for survival. On both albums Gaughan's singing is marvellous: at times, tender and passionate, or edged with anger as the mood suits. Gaughan is also a guitarist of no mean ability, and it's rather disappointing that he no longer plays instrumental sets.

Billy Bragg's latest offering, Talking To The Taxman About Poetry, represents a very long tradition of protest songs stretching back hundreds of years. In fact,

the young Bragg is the modern equivalent of Dick Gaughan, whose 'Think Again' was recorded on the B-side of Bragg's single, 'Levi Stubbs' Tears'.

This, the third Bragg album, sees a greater use of other musicians and a greater variety of instruments. Even so, the songs are as powerful as ever, whether concerned with politics or love. As long as people like Billy Bragg stick around, folk-rock can be assured of a very promising future.

Brass Monkey and The Home Service are two English mainstream folk bands. The former contains two giants from the folk world: John Kirkpatrick and Martin Carthy. They provide the solid folk foundation, and are supported by an excellent brass section. See How It Runs is their second album, and is guaranteed to add to the success achieved by the first.

The Home Service also have a heavy brass sound, but differ by their use of electric instruments. Alright Jack is their second album, and a vast improvement on the first. The band now seems to be nearing its potential, skillfully blending the brass with the electric. Both Brass Monkey and The Home Service, go a long way to proving that the indigenous English music is one of the world's finest.

△

ART & INNOVATION

Eno & Mills

more dark than shark

by Tom Farrelly

From time to time, rock journalists and musicians refer to something known as "the twenty most influential people in rock". If this eminent gathering does exist, then there's a good chance that Brian Eno would find a place among its number. Young rock enthusiasts who gasp:

"Who?", may be forgiven, for the past ten years or so Eno has occupied an increasingly peripheral position in rock music. In fact, these days his "ambient music" displays few, if any, of the characteristics normally associated with rock.

Those a little longer in the tooth, and with a sense of rock's history, will remember his important contri-

bution to the early work of the influential band, Roxy Music. Also, avid readers of record sleeve notes and acknowledgements, will attest to his numerous collaborative and production ventures with popular performers such as, David Bowie, Talking Heads, Ultravox, Devo, and most recently, U2. Put simply, whilst exploring the uncommercial reaches of experimental music, Eno has also

enjoyed fame-by-association in popular music circles.

Illustrator, Russell Mills certainly thinks highly of Eno's work; highly enough to have devoted fifty seven pictures to an exploration of his song lyrics, published here for the first time.

"For me it had the stunning effect that one acquires if one is hit on the bridge of one's nose by the edge of a brick," is how he describes his first encounter with Here Come The Warm Jets, Eno's debut solo album of 1973.

Mills' aims are basically twofold: to depict the meaning(s) of the lyrics, however diffuse or ambiguous, whilst in the process attempting to destroy "the stigma of subservience that it (illustration) has acquired in relation to the other arts." In one sense Mills' work could be seen as the result of much misplaced endeavour, when one

considers Eno's attitude to his own lyrics. "For me it's nearly always the music that does the talking - the words are at best clues, appendages ... an edge to my work that others tend to regard as

central." Undeterred, and admitting the influence of Dadaists, Kurt Schwitters and Marcel Duchamp, Mills has produced a series of striking collages depicting ominous environments, peopled by mannequin-like creatures often engaged in sadistic surgical acts. Whether or not the pictures can be fully appreciated without access to or knowledge of Eno's lyrics, remains a debatable point which leaves illustration in a similarly questionable position in terms of its status as 'significant art', to that of programme music in relation to so-called 'absolute music'.

Less contentious, but of equal importance, are the informative and thoughtfully constructed commentaries by Rick Poynor on both Mills and Eno. In the latter's case, material has been drawn from press interviews, previously unseen notebook entries, essays, and lectures given by Eno in the seventies. The commentaries discuss, in particular, the following areas: the relevance of Eno's art school background to his painterly approach to sound;

the influence of experimental composers like, John Cage, Cornelius Cardew, and Steve Reich, and their use of chance and repetition; the influence of thinkers like, Morse Peckham and Stafford Beer, and their work in cybernetics, biology and aesthetics; the use of Eno's and Peter Schmidt's Oblique Strategies, the pack of instructive cards devised to help unblock creative blocks and suggest alternative creative processes.

At the end of it all, one can't help but wonder why someone with Eno's creative intelligence spent so much time working to expand the parameters of rock music - a musical form not usually known for its abundance of intelligence. Though I, for one, am glad he did, because without the benefit of his insight and imagination one of this country's most popular pastimes would be a sight more anaemic than it is today.

More Dark Than Shark will probably find most of its readers amongst the longstanding devotees of Eno, but its true appeal should be much

wider than that, and so encompass all those interested in experimentation and innovation in the arts.

(published by Faber & Faber, 1986. £16.50) Δ

INTERVIEW

DIG THE NEW JAZZ BREED

Interview: Andy Breton

Photos: Cathy Bourne

Tickets sold days before the gig?
Punters turned away in the foyer?
A bloody long queue at the bar?
The audience screaming for more?
Autograph hunters pestering the
band? At a jazz gig in Birmingham?
UNPRECEDENTED! But then, so are
LOOSE TUBES.

ANDY BRETON asked EDDIE PARKER (he of pink jacket and striped trousers fame) and DJANGO BATES to explain why he had to sit cramped up on a step at the Triangle with two numb buttocks and hardly an inch to tap his big toe.

Before the big band

EDDIE: Graham Collier was getting an experimental big band together to do modernish scores with young musicians who were involved in lots of different areas of jazz and free improvisation, and so it started off as a rehearsal band with people bringing in scores and charts which we read. After a while a couple of people within the band, Steve Berry and Django, started writing stuff. It was then that we decided to go for it as a band, and not just as a rehearsal band playing other people's music.

Taking off

EDDIE: The first gig we had was unimpressive, but not from us. We played well, but the organisers of the gig fucked-up and there were only about five people there.

DJANGO: The audience weren't allowed in. They were all waiting outside. That was a bit of a problem.

EDDIE: We did play at a London pub called The Prince Of Orange. There's

quite a lot of trad. jazz played there, and all the regulars that were into the trad. stuff were really knocked out with us. But we had to move on from that because there were so many of us and it was becoming impracticable.

DJANGO: They nailed a piano to the stage and wouldn't move it, so there was no room for us.

EDDIE: There was one gig at the Seven Dials which was particularly good. We hoped then that it was going to take off, and there was a

brilliant review. Then nothing happened. But we got the Ronnie Scott gig for a week which was subsidized by the musicians union, and that was the thing that launched us.

Democracy

DJANGO: Up to now about six people have composed things for the band, and the rest either haven't because they don't want to, or they haven't got round to it yet. Whoever writes a piece rehearses it and tries to explain how it should be played. If



the rest of the band don't like it, which has happened only once or twice, then it doesn't get played, which I think is fair enough. I've taken along a piece and known immediately that it's wrong for the band.

EDDIE: With twenty-one people there's bound to be dissent. But we work on the principle that not everybody in the band is into all the tunes we do, but if the general weight of the band is towards playing something then the rest will go along with it.

Backgrounds

(enter STEVE DAY)

STEVE DAY: My background is basically classically trained, I suppose. I went through the Youth Jazz Orchestra scene, and even worked with a pantomime in Birmingham this year for twelve weeks. Quite a few of the brass players have had similar backgrounds. Ashley and Richard did the orchestral course at the National Centre Of Orchestral Studies. Dave Powell and John Eacott went through university where they studied music.

DJANGO: It would be a lie to say that anyone was completely self-taught. We're a band that can read very difficult music and play the sort of things that a lot of jazz bands would give up on, I think.

The look

EDDIE: When we started doing gigs we didn't want to be just like every other jazz band. I wouldn't say we're a 'groomed' band. That's the sort of Wynton Marsalis look with the expensive suit and the bootlace tie.

DJANGO: It was never a policy to decide to dress up weird. Everyone seemed to go that way. When I set off to a gig it does flash across my mind not to look really boring when I know that people are going to be wearing trousers like John's and Eddie's. So there is a bit of a competitive thing in it too.

The mood

EDDIE: Definitely. That's one of the main aspects of the band. With Loose Tubes you've got twenty-one musicians from different backgrounds, and it would be a shame if the whole thing was to go down the plug-hole. When we first started doing gigs it was great feeling of excitement for us, and we wanted the audience to sense this too.

The new album

DJANGO: There's no new policy it's just another set of our music.

EDDIE: I think we were doing some of the tunes from the second album when the first album came out. But



there was a definite change in our approach to recording the second album. With the first one we made the mistake of trying to be a bit too conscious of the production, and we lost so much of the playing and the spontaneous feel of the music. When we went to do the second album our approach was not to bother about the production side to it, but to concentrate on feeling right in the studio and doing the actual playing. After a couple of days of playing we got down to the heavy stuff, the mixing. It took fifteen hours of playing to record seven tracks.

Fads

DJANGO: I'm very worried for Courtney Pine because he's been picked up at a very young age, when he's possibly not ready for it. He could be dropped by his record company.

EDDIE: When we started we had many reviews saying what herces we were. Brilliant young new band...blah, blah, blah. But when those critics get used to seeing us and get familiar with the band and its music

they seem to find it difficult to say anything new and constructive about us. In fact in the last few months we've been getting sour reviews, for reasons which we can't understand.

DJANGO: It's certainly not going to alter anything we play, or, I think, how many gigs we get. But we're not a fad. Nothing is going to stop this band playing what it wants to.

EDDIE: But there's another thing to it, too. We're Loose Tubes and we're into pushing ourselves, but we'd also hope that other musicians up and down the country who play a similar sort of music, might benefit from our popularity and therefore hopefully people will start listening to their music. Loose Tubes represents a whole section of the musical society, and there's a lot of people who are condemned to obscurity because they're playing music that means something to them. So we're hoping that by doing what we do, and doing it with plenty of commitment people will start looking in their direction too.

INTERVIEW

AUSPICIOUS SIGNS



Interview and photographs: Tom Farrelly

ASK any music punter who the hottest band in the Midlands is right now, and I guarantee that more than nine out of ten will say THE MIGHTY LEMON DROPS. The Wolverhampton-based line-up of Paul Marsh, Dave Newton, Tony Linehan and Keith Rowley, has quickly established itself as one of the finest in the country. And their debut album is currently making very happy headway in the U.K. Top Fifty. RUBBERNECK sent that inveterate cynic, TOM FARRELLY, along to the band's recent album-signing venture at Birmingham's H.M.V. store, where he discussed success with a remarkably composed PAUL MARSH and DAVE NEWTON.

I UNDERSTAND THE TOUR HAS TURNED OUT TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL?

PAUL: Yes, it's gone really well. Nearly all of the gigs have sold out. We played in Manchester and there were eight hundred people there. We couldn't believe it.

HAS ALL THE AIRPLAY AND MUSIC PRESS ATTENTION INCREASED THE PRESSURE ON YOU?

DAVE: Yes, I think people are coming to the gigs expecting something now. In the past we got a few hundred people coming mainly out of interest. Now they've heard the album, they're expecting much more. So there's a bit more pressure.

AND THE MOVE FROM THE INDIE SCENE TO A MAJOR LABEL, HAS THAT EFFECTED THE WAY YOU APPROACH YOUR MUSIC?

PAUL: We take it all much more seriously now. In indie land it was just a laugh really. But now we're starting to get paid more, we've got to treat what we do like a business.

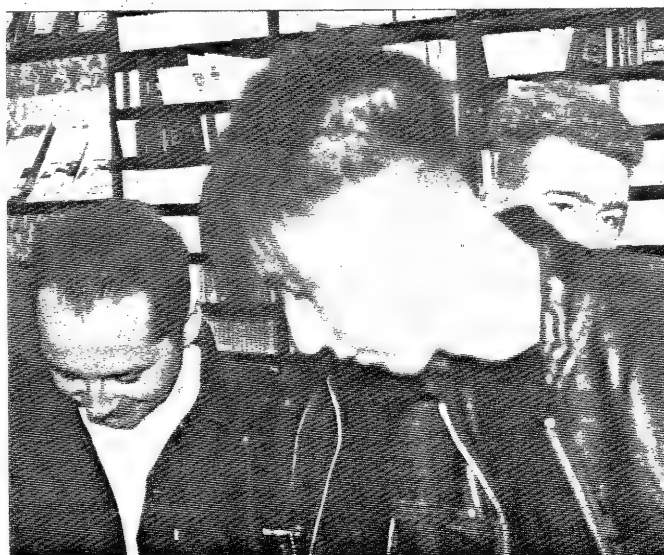
DAVE: Everything you do now, every song you write is not just for yourself. People are getting to hear what you write, so there's pressure on you in that way. Every time you come up with a new song, it's presented to Chrysalis records, and they start to think this could be an A-side or a B-side, or even an album track. Though that's good in a way because it makes you work harder.

DO YOU STILL HAVE AS MUCH CONTROL OVER YOUR WRITING NOW YOU'RE WITH A MAJOR LABEL?

PAUL: Yes we have. In fact, we're really halfway in between. We've got all the best aspects of an indie label on a major, because Blue Guitar is run independently of Chrysalis even though they finance it. Geoff Travis, the boss of Rough Trade, runs Blue Guitar and he has the final say on everything to do with the label, but in practice, he leaves it all in our hands.

DAVE: We decide what songs go out,

and we design the record sleeves ourselves. I don't think we'd have signed to a major if that freedom hadn't been written into the contract. We waited for it, and it came, and we're supposed to be really lucky to have that sort of artistic control.





MOVING ON TO THE SONGS ON 'HAPPY HEAD', YOU'RE QUOTED AS SAYING THAT YOU'RE NOT INTERESTED IN MAKING ANY POLITICAL GESTURES DESPITE THE CURRENT WAVE OF BANDS DOING THAT.

DAVE: That's right. It doesn't come naturally to us to write about such things.

PAUL: We all have our views on politics but we prefer to keep them out of the songs.

DAVE: We're not qualified to give our views on politics. We're in a privileged position so we're not going to ram any ideas down any-

body's throat because we don't feel we know enough about it ourselves. Some people can do it, and do it well, but it's not for us. It's all right for the Redskins, but we're not like them.

PAUL: We'd rather call our's, love songs, rock songs.

DO YOU THINK THE MIDLANDS IS A GOOD AREA FOR A YOUNG BAND TO GET STARTED?

DAVE: Wolverhampton has been good insofar as there was nothing else to do there.



PAUL: I think there are a lot more bands coming from Birmingham now. You've got the Wild Flowers, Pop Will Eat Itself, Fuzzbox. But I wouldn't say there was a Birmingham scene, like there's a London scene.

DAVE: It's easy round here just to play to your friends and no one else, and you get buried in the Midlands and you never get heard of outside. You've really got to play London to get anywhere. That's where we were lucky. We had Dan Tracy at Dreamworld in London take an interest in us. Before he was in a position to put out any records, he gave us loads of gigs in London. Places like The Room At The Top, where you've got plenty of music journalists watching the bands. So we were put in the spotlight straight away.

SO DO YOU SEE YOURSELVES DRIFTING TOWARDS LONDON AS A BASE?

PAUL: Well, we still live in Wolverhampton, and we spend nearly all of our time there, just occasionally we go away for a gig.

DAVE: There's no real sense in us moving to London. Living in the Midlands means that wherever you go you're not far from home. It's very convenient. London's all right for a day or two, but none of us could see ourselves living there. I'm not saying we never will, but certainly not for the moment, anyway. Δ

REGGAE

SLENG TENG FINISH ALREADY!

Leroy Edwards assesses the current trends in Reggae



If the national charts over the last nine months are anything to go by, then it seems that reggae music has finally made it as a major form of popular music; or as they say: "it 'gan outernational".

The success of Smiley Culture's number 11 national hit, 'Police Officer', in January 1985, was not fully capitalized on until the early months of 1986, with the massive pop hit achieved

by Sophie George, and her fast-style rap, 'Girlie-Girlie'. Since then, Audrey Hall, Tipper Ire, Maxi Priest and even veteran performer, Boris Gardener, have been hailed as pop supers - a

status normally reserved for the regular occupants of the Hot 100.

Minor success stories include the more Dance-Hall based artists like, Supercat, and Audrey's sister Pam, with the Boops sagas. Also, Freddie McGregor's 'Push Comes To Shove', and 'The Great Train Robbery' by the Junior Reid fronted Black Uhuru, to name but a couple.

The success of reggae music in 1986 in the wider pop arena cannot be overstated. The Gallup figures only go part of the way to explaining the phenomenal record sales specialist music such as reggae has had to attain before being properly recognised. But, the problem in 1986 has not been its acceptability, rather its own personal direction.

Although there are many sub-headings under the general heading 'Reggae', there seems to have been a movement towards two differing market positions. The crossover sector is by definition those records conceived with the main aim being to break into the national/international markets, with the production processes, marketing and packaging all geared towards that aim. The Dance-Hall sector, on the other hand, was traditionally seen as a breeding ground for new and

exciting raw talent, attempting to establish itself. This youthful energy was transferred on to vinyl in its pure and earthy state. Young inner-city toasters took their inspiration from long established J.A. exponents such as U. Roy, U. Brown, Dillinger, Tapper Zukie, and the latter-day originators, Yellowman, Brigadier Jerry, and from imported cassettes of Jamaica's finest sound systems.

The early to mid-eighties saw a movement away from imitating the predictable and staid sound coming out of J.A.. This was also coupled with an upsurge of talent from the streets of London, Birmingham and New York, attempting to break free of the yard stranglehold. Sound systems flourished with ghettology as its main linchpin: Saxon Studio International with Tipper Ire and Maxi Priest in their ranks, innovative, inventive and original in their perception of Dance-Hall music.

It was now the turn of Kingston to imitate London.

The movement has now gone full circle as British M.C.'s and producers have retreated into following the Kingston and New York examples once again. Dance-Hall music (not the traditional vibrant sound of the classic 60's and 70's

reggae of the Trojan, Studio One and Treasure Isle stables) a genre borne out of the bastardization of those classics, now reigns supreme with the added sophistication of technology. Reggae producers have gone computer-crazy, regurgitating old rhythms with newer Casio-based beats. Record labels such as Prince Jammys, Techniques, and Unity sounds are the main culprits of this electro madness.

On the live front, reggae promoters need to learn a thing or ten from their rock counterparts if reggae is going to compete on the same terms. Organisation, value for money, and respectability should be the order of the day: cold dark halls with corrupt P.A. systems do not serve as a good promoting place for the 'new and better' reggae of the 80's.

Proper shows at a proper hour and at a proper price would help remove the mystique and fear which is associated with 'the dance hall'.

A more professional approach to marketing and promoting the dance hall and its music is what reggae needs. The crossover sector will take care of itself, but pure reggae needs to be nurtured, cherished, and encouraged to develop. △



CITIES OF SOAP

The sayings of Chairman Phil

The 2nd Birmingham Film and Television Festival ended with an interesting celebration and investigation of 'soap operas'. Actors and script writers, producers and production staff of East Enders, Coronation Street, Emmerdale Farm, Crossroads, and Brookside met to reveal and discuss how soaps are put together, and whether they should be vehicles for socially relevant issues. PHIL REDMOND, creator of Brookside and Chairman of Mersey Television Limited, opened the "Soap City" debate with an inquiry into the place of regionalism in soaps. A. RUBBERNECK was there to record some of the highlights of Phil's speech.

"What is 'soap opera'? The answer to that is, I don't know."

"Some people watch soaps for the fashion. Like myself, I always watch Dallas to see what J.R.'s wearing."

"Then there are the sub-categories of 'soap'. You've

got the glamour soaps, the escapist soaps, and the socially relevant soaps. Brookside is of course a glamour soap."

"There is a danger of getting into 'escalatory drama'. You do one story one week, and you've got to top it with something else the next. When we did "the siege" we had a crisis of conscience: is the siege relevant to Brookside? People were wondering what we were going to do next. We thought of having a terrorist cell hiding out in Harry Cross' front garden."

"East Enders now is like Brookside was four years ago: revolutionary, breaking new ground, and dealing with social issues that soaps had never tackled before."

"Brookside is cost-effective television. It costs £80,000 an hour, which is 50% of the cost of I.T.V. or B.B.C."

"Soap opera is the cheapest form of television drama. So, in the future, we will have

more soap, and there's not going to be much choice about it really, because of the low cost."

"The problem is, if we're going to have more soaps, are we going to have more Nick Berrys at number 1? There could be a whole new industry of soap records. At the moment, we're agonizing at Brookside over whether Pat should pursue a singing career."

"In soap opera you've got a regionalism which you haven't got in mainstream television. For example, when Coronation Street started it really was a representation of northern working-class life."

"Channel Four was a wasted opportunity in broadcasting. It's now suffering from a metropolitan view of things. They deny this strongly and say they're a national channel, but with a central government and everything else running through London, television becomes a metropolitan view."

VINDALOO COOL IN THE SHADE

ALONE and staring into a pint of lager in the shadows at Burberries, was where I discovered Vindaloo records boss, ROB LLOYD. Not crying in your lager over the demise of the Nightingales I hope, Rob?

He shakes his head emphatically, and begins to tell me his side of the story.

"There's no real reason why the Nightingales split up. They just sort of crumbled apart. I was doing a lot of other things that were taking up my time, and, as I understand it, the rest of the band was a bit frustrated about it - which was quite understandable. We spoke about it, and they decided to carry on without me. I think it's for the best. I don't feel any malice towards the other members, and at the same time I don't really care what they get up to."

Rob's not spilling many beans when it comes to revealing what his plans are for the future. He did reveal that he hopes to launch a solo career with the release of a single in the new year.

Generally speaking, he seems a good deal happier now that he no longer faces the pressures of being in a band.

"There's a certain compromise being in any band. If you went through a spell of wanting to play reggae and the rest of the band hate reggae, you end up either not doing it, or compromising it. I just don't want to bother with any of that any more. If I decide tomorrow I want to take a ten-piece band on the road, then I'd just like to pay them as a business, and they'd back me up and do what I say."

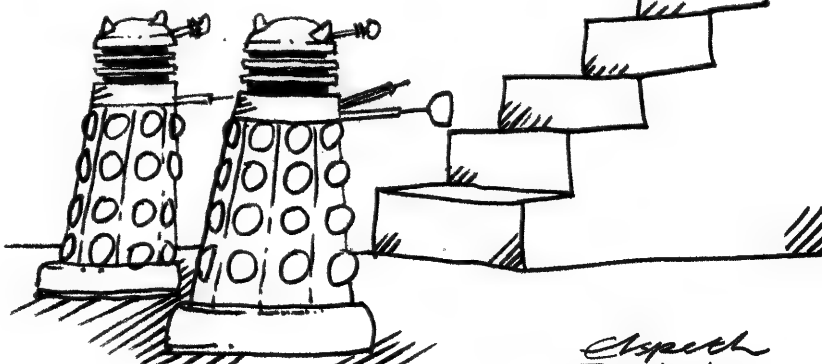
And what about Vindaloo records itself, what goodies lie in store for us?

"Well, there's a new Fuzzbox album out in December as a follow-up to the new single. And there'll be a new Ted Chippington single, not taken from the album, out in the new year."

At this point, I beat a hasty retreat, leaving Mr. Lloyd to confront the posse of spiky haircuts heading for his table in the shadows. △

Ruth Leboff

Well that buggers
up our plans for
world domination!



*Elspeth
Toothplay ne*

INTERVIEW

Multiple Headaches or Multiple Orgasms ?

STUMP
weigh
up
the
odds

Interview: Tom Farrelly

Photos: Cathy Bourne



1986 has been a good year for STUMP. They began the year with a very successful John Peel session, soon after achieving the status of "Peel faves". Next, they released an e.p. entitled, Mud On A Colon which featured one of the most memorable indie singles of '86, 'Orgasm Way'. Their debut mini-l.p. Quirkout was released a short while ago containing six more highly individual tracks, which will only further their reputation as musicians with considerable potential. RUBBERNECK collared the band for a while when they visited Birmingham late in the year.

WHAT FIRST ATTRACTED ME TO YOUR MUSIC WAS THAT UNLIKE MOST INDIE BANDS, YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY THE VELVET UNDERGROUND. PERHAPS THERE'S A BIT OF BEEFHEART IN THERE INSTEAD?

ROB: Yes, there certainly is a lot of Beefheart, but it's not something we were consciously after. We see it as just Stump music. But we do consciously try to get things sounding not quite normal, dischordant.

HAS IT BEEN DIFFICULT TO GET GIGS BECAUSE OF THIS?

ROB: Initially it was very difficult, but after a while they started to come in, no problem.

WHAT ABOUT PRESS REACTION?

MICK: Well, we had a review today in

London which was basically saying that everything clings together and you can only pick out one thing from each song. The guy obviously hadn't listened to the music properly. If you listen to our stuff a couple of times, it works. I'm not going to make compromises so that it comes out sounding like pop music.

KEV: Having Mick fronting the band adds a three-dimensional thing. The lyrics are quite humorous, I suppose you'd call them Black Comedy, and they pull your interest into a style of music that maybe you wouldn't normally like.

YOU SOUND VERY DEDICATED TO THIS SORT OF MUSIC?

ROB: Our whole lives are completely wrapped up in Stump music. It's the frame of reference for everything we do. I have breakfast, it's Stump. I go to the toilet, it's Stump. I get pissed, it's Stump. It's the only way. You've got to have total belief.

IF WE CAN RETURN TO THE LYRICS FOR A MOMENT. THEY'RE DISTINCTIVE, AND YOUR DELIVERY MICK IS RATHER UNORTHODOX. WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR SAY, 'ORGASM WAY'?

MICK: I was signing on the dole living in Brixton, and my giro went missing. So I had to go down to the world's worst D.H.S.S. office, Camber-

well New Road. I had a two-hour stretch down there, and the song is a description of that frustration. The orgasm is when you sort of close your eyes and wish you had a job and were satisfied, and when you came home your kids would come up and kiss you, and you had aspidistras in the house and potatoes in the garden. It's drawing a contrast between having no money, and on the other hand having security, the orgasm.

YOU VISITED WOLVERHAMPTON NOT LONG AGO WITH THAT PETROL EMOTION. THERE SEEMED A GOOD DEAL OF COMRADESHIP BETWEEN THE BANDS.

KEV: That's right. They're pals of ours, and it's great when you arrive at a place. They say hello, and it's a really warm atmosphere which is conducive to doing a good gig.

ROB: And there's respect too, mutual respect between the bands.

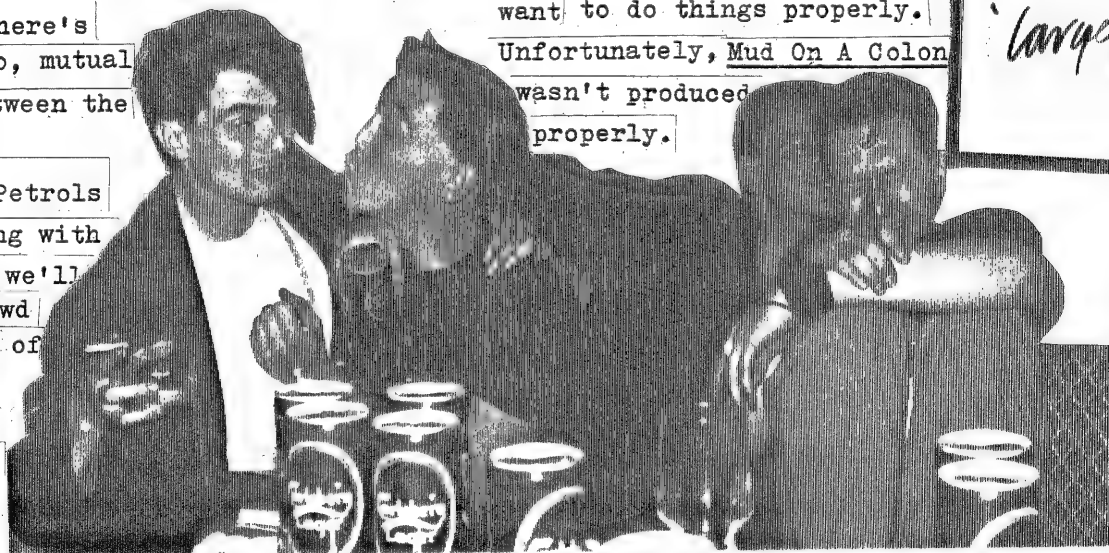
MICK: The Petrols like playing with us because we'll get the crowd going. Lots of bands will choose a really

shitty support act so that they can outplay them. The Petrols like a challenge. Of course, the other important thing is that they make sure you get a good sound, and get the money!

YOU'VE BEEN QUITE SLOW TO RELEASE YOUR MATERIAL. WHY IS THIS?

ROB: It's really a case of finding the right people to release the material, not just trying to go for a major label and getting loads of money and then being dictated to. Signing your life away.

MICK: We've only released what we really like. For Quirkout, that's six out of twenty-six songs if you like. We don't want to put out songs just because they are there. We want to do things properly. Unfortunately, Mud On A Colon wasn't produced properly.



YOU WEREN'T HAPPY WITH IT THEN?

ROB: Oh, God no!

MICK: I don't know what the others think, but I'd like to bring it out again.

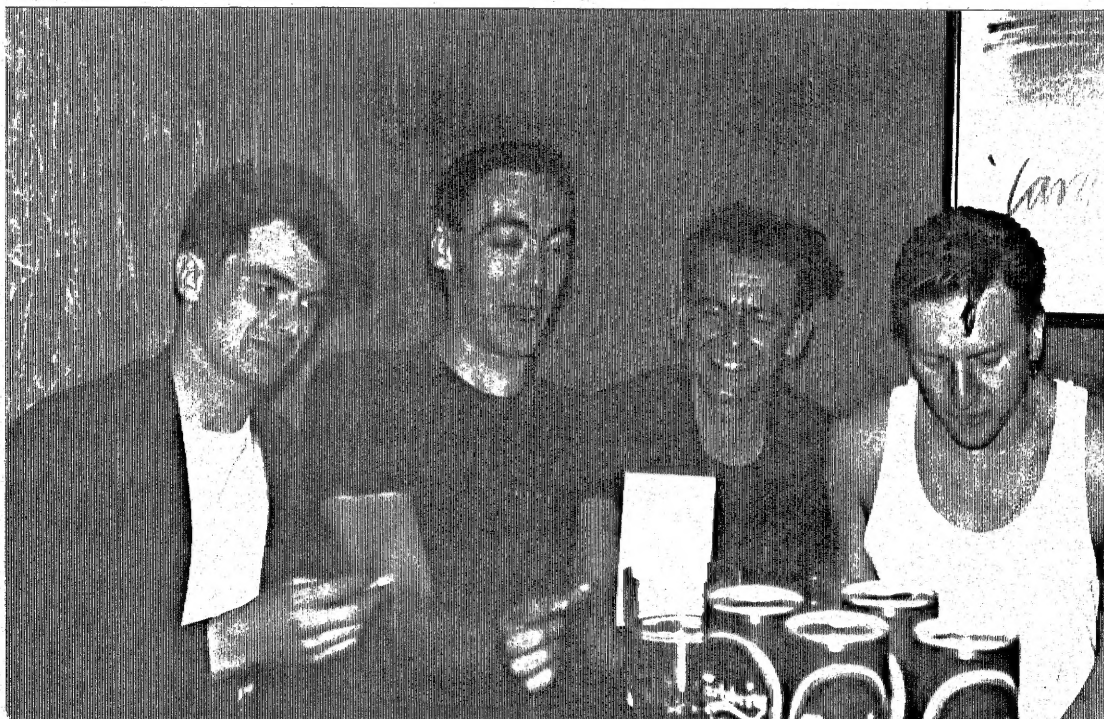
KEV: It would certainly be a revelation to people to hear them properly, as they should sound.

WHAT ABOUT THE PRODUCTION FOR QUIRKOUT, ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THAT?

ROB: Yes, it's fine by anyone's standards. Hugh Jones, who's worked with The Colour Field, was the producer. He worked really hard, and we took twelve days to complete the work on it.

YOU'VE BEEN EXPRESSING SOME DISSATISFACTION WITH THE WAY THE TECHNICAL SIDE OF THE 'INDIE SCENE' SOMETIMES WORKS. I TAKE IT YOU'RE NOT AS ENTHUSIASTIC AS SOME OF THE BIGGER BANDS LIKE, THE FALL AND THE SMITHS WHO PREFER TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT?

ROB: I feel there is no musical difference between the bands on indie labels and the bands on major labels. But there's a pompous clique thing about having to be an indie band - that doesn't interest me. If we found a major record company that we could deal with properly, then we'd go for it.



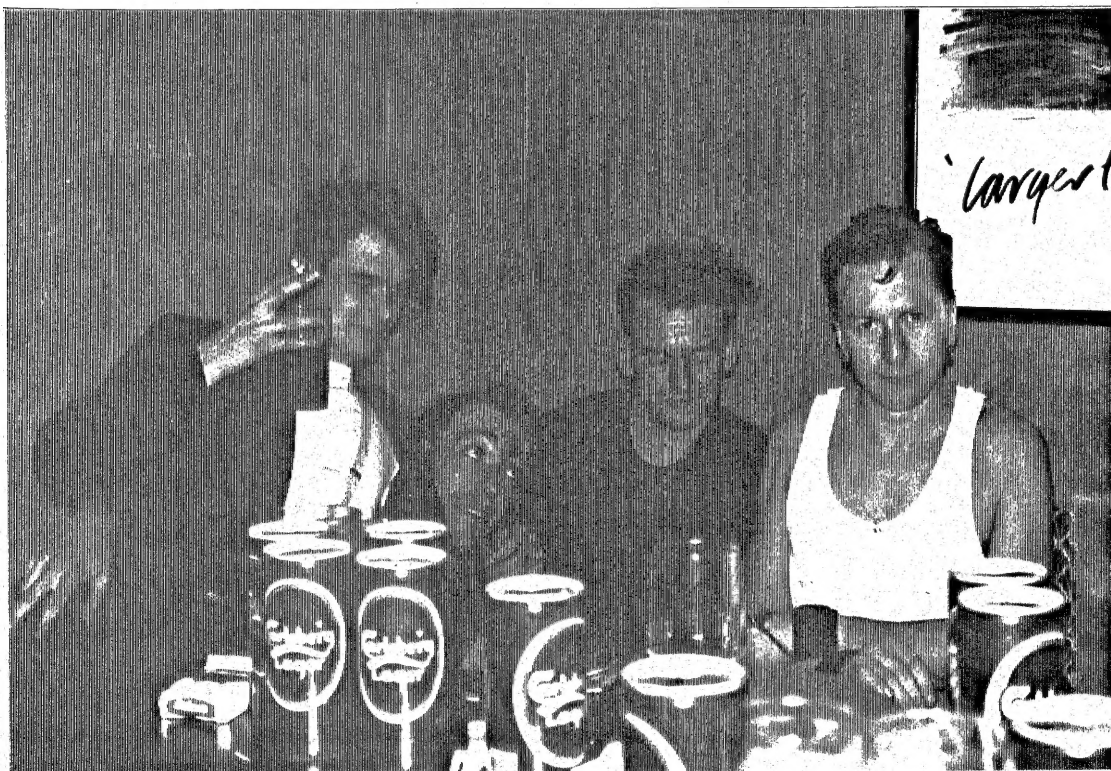
MICK: Ron Johnson is a great label, but the man can't afford to do things the way they should be done. He can only produce a maximum of say, five thousand copies of a single. He just doesn't have the money to risk making any more.

ROB: Also, if you make a record, and you're really proud of it and you sweat over it, but it's badly produced because you haven't got the money, and nobody hears it and so it dies it's really frustrating! So logic dictates that you have to look for a label that'll give you the money to produce it properly, and then get it distributed properly so that people who like it, can go out and buy it. I

couldn't find Mud On A Colon anywhere in London when it was first released!

MICK: Even so, I like the independent ethic, at least the way they try to keep things personal. Major labels aren't personal, and you lose control over what you're doing. At present, we have more or less total control over what we're doing. Of course we want to be successful, we'd be lying if we didn't admit to that, but we also want to keep it personal. △

STUMP is: Mick Lynch (vocals)
Kev Hopper (bass)
Rob McKahey (drums)
Chris Salmon (guitar)



next issue
the second part and grand
finale to the STAN TRACEY
story
the North will RISE again!
interviews with the mighty
FALL and JAMES
and the rest . . .

... a match or the
lines at bridge or whist etc.
~~rubberize~~ v. to treat or coat with rubber.
rubberneck n. (Amer. slang) a gaping
sightseer, an inquisitive person. —v.
(Amer. slang) to behave as a rubberneck.
hbery adj. like rubber.
ish n. 1. waste or worthless material.
rubbishy adj.
rough fragments